



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

News Release

Pacific Islands External Affairs Office

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Additional Public Comments Sought on Proposed Rule to List Hawaiian Picture-wings

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is seeking additional public comments on a proposed rule to list 12 species of Hawaiian picture-wings as endangered. The notice published in the *Federal Register* today seeks any new information that may be available regarding the status of the 12 species since they were originally proposed in January 2001.

The public comment period will be open for 30 days allowing all interested parties time to consider the information provided in the proposed rule and submit comments. The Service welcomes all comments regarding the proposed rule but is especially interested in those pertaining to: biological, commercial trade, or other relevant data concerning threats to the 12 species; the location of any additional populations; additional information on the range, distribution, and population sizes of these species; and current or planned activities in the areas inhabited by the 12 species of Hawaiian picture-wings and the possible impacts of activities on these species. Comments already submitted in 2001 need not be resubmitted as they will be fully considered in the final determination of the proposed rule.

The species of Hawaiian picture-wings proposed for listing as endangered are: *Drosophila aglaia*, *Drosophila differens*, *Drosophila hemipeza*, *Drosophila heteroneura*, *Drosophila montgomeryi*, *Drosophila mulli*, *Drosophila musaphiliia*, *Drosophila neoclavisetae*, *Drosophila obatai*, *Drosophila ochrobasis*, *Drosophila substenoptera*, and *Drosophila tarphytrichia*.

These species of Hawaiian picture-wings face many threats such as habitat degradation by feral ungulates, loss of host plants, and predation and parasitization by non-native insects including ants and wasps. Due to their restricted distribution and small population sizes, three of the species (*Drosophila mulli*, *Drosophila neoclavisetae*, and *Drosophila substenoptera*) also face extinction from naturally occurring random events such as hurricanes and landslides.

Hawaiian picture-wings have been called the “birds of paradise” of the insect world because of their spectacular displays during courtship and defense of their territories. The picture-wings are known for their elaborate markings on otherwise clear wings, and belong to the intensely studied fruit fly family known as Drosophilidae. Studies of the Hawaiian

picture-wings, some of which began in the early twentieth century, have revealed an incredible evolutionary history as fascinating as that of the Galapagos finches.

Approximately 600 species of Hawaiian picture-wings are currently known, and scientists estimate the total as high as 1,000 species. Each species is specially adapted not only to a particular island, but also a specific habitat type, allowing them to inhabit a wide range of ecosystems from desert-like habitats to rain forests and swamplands. In many cases, a species requires a specific native host plant during portions of its breeding cycle.

Each of the 12 Hawaiian picture-wings in this listing rule is found only on a single island, and each breeds only on a single or a few related species of plants, some of which are also listed as threatened or endangered species. Six of the picture-wings are found on Oahu, three on the island of Hawaii, and one each on Kauai, Molokai, and Maui. One of the Big Island species was thought to be extinct until an extremely small population was rediscovered in 1993.

The reopening of the public comment period and proposal to list the 12 species of picture-wings is a result of a court settlement between the Fish and Wildlife Service and the Center for Biological Diversity on August 31, 2005. Pursuant to the court settlement, the Service must make a final listing decision for the picture-wings by April 17, 2006, and if prudent and determinable, propose critical habitat by September 15, 2006, and finalize critical habitat by April 16, 2007.

The Service will consider comments and materials from all interested parties received by November 3, 2005. Comments and materials concerning this final listing should be sent to Patrick Leonard, Field Supervisor, Pacific Islands Fish and Wildlife Office, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 300 Ala Moana Boulevard, Room 3-122, P.O. Box 50088, Honolulu, HI 96850.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 545 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resources offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign and Native American tribal governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Assistance program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.